

IN THE CLAIMS:

A complete listing of the pending claims of this application, including any amendments made by this paper, follows below:

1. (Currently Amended) A notebook comprising:

a stack of a plurality of sheets of paper bound together, said stack having an outer perimeter thereof, said stack further having a generally elongate opening located therein and formed through a thickness thereof, said opening being sized and shaped to receive a writing instrument therethrough and being generally spaced away from said outer perimeter wherein said opening includes a length-to-width ratio of at least about 6:1;

a cover coupled to said plurality of sheets of paper, said cover being movable to a closed position wherein said cover is generally parallel to and faces a top sheet of said stack of sheets of paper, said cover having at least one of a thickness or stiffness that is greater than each sheet of said plurality of sheets of paper; and

a retaining mechanism to retain said cover in said closed position such that when said cover is retained in said closed position said opening is generally closed to trap a writing instrument that is located in said opening therein.

2. (Previously Presented) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said cover lacks any opening that is of the same size and shape of said opening of said stack that is aligned with said opening of said stack.

3. (Original) The notebook of claim 1 wherein each of said plurality of sheets of paper and said cover are generally aligned.

4. (Original) The notebook of claim 1 wherein each of said plurality of sheets of paper includes a plurality of lines printed thereon.

5. (Original) The notebook of claim 1 further including a binding mechanism binding said sheets of paper and said cover together.

6. (Original) The notebook of claim 5 wherein said binding mechanism is a spiral binder.

7. (Previously Presented) The notebook of claim 5 wherein said generally elongate opening is located generally adjacent to said binding mechanism.

8. (Original) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said cover is pivotally bound to said plurality of sheets of paper such that said cover is movable to an open position in which the cover is generally not parallel with said plurality of sheets of paper.

9. (Previously Presented) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said cover lacks any opening of equal or greater size than said generally elongate opening of said stack.

10. (Original) The notebook of claim 1 wherein each of said sheets and said cover include a plurality of binding holes located adjacent to an inner edge thereof.

11. (Original) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said notebook further includes a supplemental cover pivotally coupled to said plurality of sheets of paper, wherein said retaining mechanism includes a flap coupled to said supplemental cover which can be removably coupled to said cover to retain said cover in said closed position.

12. (Original) The notebook of claim 11 wherein said one of said cover or said supplemental cover includes a male snap portion and the other ones of said cover or said supplemental cover includes a female snap portion, wherein said male snap portion and said female snap portion can cooperate to maintain said cover in said closed position.

13. (Previously Presented) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said opening includes an enlarged portion.

14. (Previously Presented) The notebook of claim 13 wherein said enlarged portion is generally centrally located along a length of said opening.

15. (Previously Presented) The notebook of claim 13 wherein said enlarged portion extends at least partially in a direction generally perpendicular to a length of said opening.

16. (Currently Amended) A notebook comprising:

a stack of a plurality of sheets of paper bound together, said stack having an outer perimeter thereof, said stack further having a generally elongate opening located therein and formed through a thickness thereof, said opening being sized and shaped to receive a writing instrument therethrough and being generally spaced away from said outer perimeter;

a cover coupled to said plurality of sheets of paper, said cover being movable to a closed position wherein said cover is generally parallel to and faces a top sheet of said stack of sheets of paper, said cover having at least one of a thickness or stiffness that is greater than each sheet of said plurality of sheets of paper; and

a retaining mechanism to retain said cover in said closed position such that when said cover is retained in said closed position said opening is generally closed to trap a writing instrument that is located in said opening therein ~~The notebook of claim 1~~ wherein said opening is at least about six inches in length.

17. (Canceled)

18. (Previously Presented) The notebook of claim 1 further including a writing instrument located in said generally elongate opening.

19. (Original) The notebook of claim 1 wherein each sheet includes a tear guide line extending generally parallel to an edge of each paper such that each sheet can be torn along its associated tear guideline and removed from said notebook.

20. (Previously Presented) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said cover covers at least about 50% of said opening of said stack.

21. (Previously Presented) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said cover is configured to retain a writing instrument located in said opening when a writing instruments is located in said opening and said cover is retained in said closed position by said retaining mechanism.

22. (Currently Amended) A notebook comprising:

a stack of a plurality of sheets of paper bound together, said stack having an outer perimeter thereof, said stack further having a generally elongate opening located therein and formed through a thickness thereof, said opening being sized and shaped to receive a writing instrument therethrough and being generally spaced away from said outer perimeter;

a cover coupled to said plurality of sheets of paper, said cover being movable to a closed position wherein said cover is generally parallel to and faces a top sheet of said stack of sheets of paper, said cover having at least one of a thickness or stiffness that is greater than each sheet of said plurality of sheets of paper; and

a retaining mechanism to retain said cover in said closed position such that when said cover is retained in said closed position said opening is generally closed to trap a writing instrument that is located in said opening therein ~~The notebook of claim 1~~ wherein said cover is configured to retain a writing instrument located in said opening when a writing instruments having a length of at least about 6 inches is located in said opening and said cover is retained in said closed position by said retaining mechanism.

23. (Currently Amended) A notebook comprising:

a stack of a plurality of sheets of paper bound together, said stack having an outer perimeter thereof, said stack further having a generally elongate opening located therein and formed through a thickness thereof, said opening being sized and shaped to receive a writing instrument therethrough and being generally spaced away from said outer perimeter;

a cover coupled to said plurality of sheets of paper, said cover being movable to a closed position wherein said cover is generally parallel to and faces a top sheet of said stack of

sheets of paper, said cover having at least one of a thickness or stiffness that is greater than each sheet of said plurality of sheets of paper; and

a retaining mechanism to retain said cover in said closed position such that when said cover is retained in said closed position said opening is generally closed to trap a writing instrument that is located in said opening therein The notebook of claim 1 wherein said opening is sized to receive a writing instrument having a length of between about 4 inches and about 7 inches, and having a width of between about 1/8 inch and about 1 inch, and wherein said cover lacks any opening that would allow such a writing instrument to pass therethrough while said writing instrument remains generally parallel to said cover.

24-26. (Canceled)

27. (Previously Presented) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said cover and opening are configured such that when said cover is retained in said closed position said opening is generally closed to trap a writing instrument that is located in said opening therein such that said writing instrument cannot be removed from said opening in any direction thereof.

28. (Previously Presented) The notebook of claim 1 wherein said opening is entirely spaced away from said outer perimeter.

29. (Previously Presented) A notebook comprising:

a stack of a plurality of sheets of paper bound together, said stack having an outer perimeter thereof, said stack further having a generally elongate opening located therein and formed through a thickness thereof, said opening being sized and shaped to receive a writing instrument therethrough and being generally spaced away from said outer perimeter;

a cover coupled to said plurality of sheets of paper, said cover being movable to a closed position wherein said cover is generally parallel to and faces a top sheet of said stack of sheets of paper, said cover having at least one of a thickness or stiffness that is greater than each sheet of said plurality of sheets of paper; and

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a retaining mechanism to retain said cover in said closed position such that when said cover is retained in said closed position said opening is generally closed to trap a writing instrument that is located in said opening therein The notebook of claim 1 wherein said notebook is configured to retain a writing instrument having a length of at least about 4 inches and having a width of at least about 1/8 inch in said opening when said cover is retained in said closed position.

30. (Previously Presented) The notebook of claim 29 further comprising said writing instrument.

31-33. (Canceled)